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Comments: Colville Forest Plan Revision

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Dear Amy and the Forest Management Plan Revision team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Forest Management Plan Revision. As a mountain biker, I have been following this process and the various proposals with great detail over the past few years. This plan is of high importance to me as it will determine mountain bike access to highly valued backcountry trails in this area for the next 15 years or more.

I first visited the Colville National Forest, and the Kettle Crest trail area specifically, about 10 years ago. Since then, I have returned every summer but one, for campouts, mountain bike riding, and volunteer trail maintenance; these trips have typically been a highlight of my summers. Over this time, I have gotten to know the Kettle Crest trail system very well. I have ridden in many of the western states and BC, and simply put, the riding experience in the Colville National Forest is one that cannot be replaced elsewhere. The area provides extremely high quality, backcountry, and in some parts, alpine trail experiences that are unparalleled in Washington state and the Northwest. This is why I have returned to the area many times, and have spent my personal vacation time doing volunteer trail maintenance to help keep these trails open to all. However, I would not have visited in the first place, nor have returned, nor have volunteered my time to maintain these trails were they not open to mountain biking. Mountain biking is a quiet, muscle powered activity with impact similar to hiking, and the Colville National Forest, and the Kettle Crest and Abercrombie trails in particular, are perfect for it. This sport inspires many of us to travel all across the state, to camp, to volunteer our time, dine and shop in small towns (Republic), and visit local breweries (Kettle Falls). A trail system that is 'destination quality' is a great economic resource for rural towns. The Kettle Crest system has the potential to provide significant economic benefit to the local communities and is unique within the northwest. For these reasons, the use of recommend wilderness, the most restrictive and draconian designation available, should not be undertaken unless there are no other management tools available.

The draft plan appears to have been undertaken in a thoughtful manner. I commend you for that. The preferred Alternative P is a generally a reasonable solution for both motorized and non-motorized recreational access, ecological integrity, and regional economic resiliency, however it has room for improvement. As drafted, Alternative P would cause the loss of two highly valued mountain bike trail systems due to proposed wilderness designations. Two changes to the plan would correct this, while also streamlining management.

* The Kettle Crest trail, in its entirety, should remain outside of recommended Wilderness areas. The proposed Bald/Snow/White wilderness designation eliminates a contiguous Kettles Crest riding experience, as well as connection to Thirteen Mile Trail. The Bald/Snow/White areas should be included in the Special Interest Area (SIA). This would unify all of the Kettle Crest under one management designation and preserve the unique north-south Crest riding experience, as well as un-interrupted access to the Pacific Northwest Trail. This can be accomplished by changing the Coyote Mountain/Hoodoo roadless area to backcountry or wilderness. Mountain bikers value long, connected trail systems, and this is one of the appeals of the Kettle Crest system. Maintaining

the Kettle Crest National Recreation Trail system as multi use, including bicycles, in its entirety, is imperative. At various campouts in this area, our group has had members ride from Sherman Pass south to the southern terminus of Kettle Crest National Recreation Trail #13, and from Sherman Pass north to the northern terminus at Deer Creek summit.

* The Abercrombie Mountain and Silver Creek trails should be removed from recommended wilderness, and instead designated as backcountry, or another SIA. The Abercrombie and Silver Creek loop should be preserved for mountain bikers as this high alpine riding experience cannot be replicated elsewhere in WA.

I also note that both of these adjustments would allow the continued use of chainsaws for trail maintenance. As a chainsaw certified volunteer, I can attest to the importance of this tool in opening trails in the spring, especially given the propensity for blowdown that we see in the Colville National Forest.

If the changes noted above are incorporated, I would be very supportive of Alternative P. It facilitates trail maintenance needs with chainsaws, allows the Kettle Crest to be designated as one uniform management designation, in turn making it easier to promote and market it as a MUST VISIT contiguous geological, ecological, and recreational destination!

Thank you again for your hard work on this plan, and for providing the opportunity for the users of this forest to voice my strong support for continued mountain bike access to the highly valued and unique trails of the Colville National Forest. I hope to continue to be able to ride and maintain all of these trails for years to come.

Sincerely,

Anthony Cree

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